

Neighborhood Advisory Committee of the City of Asheville Community Meeting
North Asheville Community Meeting

May 19, 2014

North Asheville Library 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

Committee Members Attending:

Saul Chase (Chairman), Alan Escovitz, Bob Roepnack, Barber Melton, Elaine Poovey, Joe Fioccola, Pastor Spencer Hardaway, Chris Pelly ex-officio, Asheville City Council

City Staff Attending:

Marsha Stickford, Neighborhood Coordinator; Asheville Police Department Lt. Geoffrey Rollins, North/East District Commander; North Community Resource Officer Todd Brigman; Asheville Fire Rescue Department Operations Division Chief Michael Clark; Battalion Chief north area, Joy Ponder; Shannon Tuch-Director of Development Services; Blake Esselstyn, City Planner

Also Attending: Lloyd Weinerman, Jeanné Warner, Scott Rivière, Christiana Tuchman, Julie, Hansbury, Julie Niwinski, Marjie Simpson, Amanda Luebe, Chris Pratt, Tom Muncy, Libby Flowers, Becky Dosier, Frank Dosier, Margie Bradshaw, Grace Curry, David Rodgers, Gar Ragland, Charlie O'Cain, Linda Jayckon, Lowell Smith, Sallie Broach, Tony Hauser, Carol Rogoff Hallstrom, Jesse Farthing, Jane Hallstrom, Philip Lenowitz, Portia Alexander, Mike Lewis

Chairman Saul Chase explained the geographical boundaries for the north area.

Councilman Pelly welcomed everyone and briefly explained the importance of the committee in assisting City Council to reach out to neighborhoods in all parts of Asheville. He read part of the legislation from City Council stating the purpose of the committee. He summarized the Festival of Neighborhoods and the recent Coffee and Conversation meetings that were committee sponsored events to get neighborhoods in the same room talking to each other. He announced the planning retreat to be held June 26 and stated the purpose was to bring all the information together to develop a working plan.

Saul explained the agenda and Neighborhood Advisory Committee members introduced themselves.

Presentations by North Asheville Neighborhood Associations and Individuals
Grove Park/Sunset Mountain Community:

Gar Ragland reviewed the history of the community as being developed by Mr. E. W. Grove. There are three parks in the neighborhood: Sunset Parkway, E. W. Grove Park, and Griffing Blvd. rose garden. Fund raising is centered on restoring and maintaining those parks in addition to twenty-two traffic islands. Annual events include the following: Tour of homes-September 7; Wine tasting at Metro Wines-May 27; Community yard sale-July 19; Neighborhood picnic-October 5. The neighborhood association has approximately 140 members at present.

Concerns: Conditional zoning/conditional zoning permits specifically for an abandoned church building at the corner of Charlotte Street/Sunset Parkway. The purchaser originally wanted to live in part of the facility and to open a doggy day care facility in another part. Asheville Planning and Zoning Commission rejected the proposal. The purchaser reworked his proposal to include only the doggy day care facility with no overnight stays. Shannon Tuch advised that the current zoning is RS4 and originally they were asking for Highway Business, but with the reworked proposal they would not need a variance since office or community business is allowed

under RS4. This will have to be reviewed by Planning and Zoning. The issue is scheduled to be on the City Council agenda for public input June 10. Mr. Ragland questioned, "How is the City going to address zoning issues for commercial use in neighborhoods?"

Grace Curry stated the Festival of Neighborhoods was a wonderful event and hoped we would have it again. There is good relationship with the Asheville Police Department in monitoring speeding vehicles.

Concerns: Speeding traffic on Kimberly Avenue, Edwin, Place, Edgemont Road, and Macon Avenue is a daily occurrence. She asked if the City can provide signs that tell drivers to slow down when driving through neighborhoods. Mike Lewis shared the cost of 50 signs for \$104 from Signs on the Cheap. Dog feces on sidewalks were an issue and neighborhood associations can help by communicating the need to clean up after your dogs and keeping sidewalks clean. She asked for an explanation of the difference between the Coalition of Asheville Neighborhoods (CAN) and the Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC). Barber and Alan provided the information that CAN is an advocacy group. Their purpose is to educate and advise all neighborhoods on such recent issues as short term rental/home stays and storm water rate changes. They meet the second Monday of the month from 7-9 PM at the Oakley Community Center. The NAC is an advisory group appointed by City Council.

Maney Avenue:

Tom Muncy stated there is no neighborhood association on Maney Avenue but the street plans to organize with the adjacent streets of Darcy, Fenner, Camden and Larchmont. His house was broken into two weeks ago. He moved there in 1969 and had no previous problems. Another house has been broken into three times and one time the owner was home and was physically attacked. The community is going to resurrect the Neighborhood Watch program.

Concerns: Parking issues, vehicular and foot traffic, residential break-ins, drug activity in the alley behind Merrimon Square, a left turn signal and crosswalks at Merrimon Avenue/Edgewood Road when traveling north, storm drain at the Enmark station of Merrimon Avenue backs up after a rain. Janet Dosier reported her residence was broken into and some break-ins were the result of a halfway house on Windsor Road with no permit or neighborhood notifications.

Beaverdam Valley:

Julie Niwinski stated the community association is struggling to establish. They have had one event. She said bears are more of a nuisance.

Concerns: Sidewalks on Beaverdam Road, treat bear situation more seriously

Grace Neighborhood Association:

Mike Lewis stated the association is very loosely organized. They have not been active for a long time. He felt that dealing with the City as an institution is awful but dealing with City staff has been good. He especially commended Todd Brigman and Marsha Stickford.

Concerns: Security, sidewalks blocked with utility poles, trucks disobeying "no trucks" signage on Gracelyn Road,

Norwood Park Association:

Chris Pratt said the neighborhood association is centered around social events rather than advocating for the community. There was one of the first organized neighborhoods but without major issues participation has flagged. He requested assistance from Alan in organizing efforts and writing bylaws. Marsha pointed out that there are 65-70 neighborhood groups in the city

with a variety of organizational forms. The city never set a policy for degrees of organization but has left the choice to each neighborhood to satisfy their needs.

Concerns: sidewalks, curbs, gutters, streets don't meet code.

Montford Concerns:

Michelle Zolange stated bears are an issue and requested information to help with safety issues. Marsha noted that bears are protected wildlife and not covered by the city animal control. She suggested calling the WNC Wildlife Commission. They do not routinely dart and remove bears. They also have information on coyotes on their website. The City is updating a brochure in connection with animal services. Residents should call 911 only if they feel a danger is present.

Beaverdam Run Association:

Lloyd Weinerman stated there are 136 units. The bears are aggressive and wildlife officers will not relocate them. They want to put tracking collars on. The association has a ban on bird feeders and residents are told to spray trash cans with ammonia.

Lakeshore Drive/Osborne Road:

Philip Lenowitz lives on the corner. He is concerned because there are no sidewalks on Lakeshore Drive. Younger people are moving into the neighborhood and there are no sidewalks for pedestrians or strollers. A "no trucks" sign is at the top of the street on Lakeshore but not at the bottom on Osborne. The trucks do not respect it. He felt the speed bumps were silly.

Frank Dosier asked if any help could be given to pedestrians trying to cross Merrimon Avenue near Beaver Lake. He suggested an electric warning sign. Lt. Rollins advised that decoy cars with dummies have been effective elsewhere. Marsha offered to invite DOT to a meeting to talk about Merrimon Avenue traffic issues.

Fenner Avenue/Lookout Road:

Christiana Tuchman reported there is a strong neighborhood with about thirty houses but they feel somewhat cut off because of the streets' design. Parking is permitted on one side of the street. The residents met with Marsha and Todd to discuss recent crime in the neighborhood.

Concerns: recent crime, the post carrier targeting and bullying residents telling them that the state law requires them to move mail boxes to the street when a residence changes ownership

Carol Rogoff Hallstrom announced she serves as the North representative on the Citizens Police Advisory Committee to identify issue and serve as an advocate. She suggested that the CAP and the NAC Committees need to do a better job of working together and as such should plan a joint meeting together. The Police Department is close to announcing a new strategic plan to go into effect in the next 1-3 years and we will see how neighborhoods fit into the plan.

City of Asheville Updates for North Asheville Residents:

Blake Esselstyn, City Planner, shared the resolution on short term rentals and changes to homestay requirements that will be presented to City Council on June 24. There are three types of homestay rentals that are currently legal in a residential district: an entire house, accessory apartments (basement or carriage house), and 1, 2, or 3 bedroom homestays which includes owner occupied bed & breakfasts. When there is an existing hotel in a district, Airbnbs can be rented legally. Staff is looking at other cities and stakeholders. Some options are to 'permit' homestays, crack down on illegal ones or modify the homestay regulations. Proposed regulation changes include changing the size requirement from 2,500 square feet to 1,200 square feet, not requiring breakfasts, changing parking standards and proof of insurance. The Planning and

Zoning Commission recommended that City Council deny the changes as they felt the City should be taking a more comprehensive look that addresses enforcement which has been complaint driven. Shannon explained when a violation is found the owner is given a reasonable amount of time to correct the violation and then subject to a \$100 a day citation until it is corrected. Buncombe County allows short term rentals. A short term rental is defined as a maximum stay of thirty days. Not every property is eligible. There are concerns about concentrations in small areas. Scott Rivière (Manor Grounds/Albemarle Park community) stated that his community is a small neighborhood with narrow winding streets originally designed for horses. They do not want sidewalks although it is a pedestrian area. There is little to no on-street parking. Because the City does not have sufficient staff to enforce the short term rental ordinance, he felt the lack of enforcement would pit neighbor against neighbor.

- Asheville Police Department Lt. Geoffrey Rollins encouraged attendees to place serial numbers on personal property items. Officer Keith McCulloch is the department CEPTED resource to assist in recording them. The Department has been successful using Leads on Line, a computer program that will track serial numbers in solving crimes of theft. Asheville is divided into three districts for police services. In the North/East districts there are four beats staffed with thirty-two officers, four sergeants, two full-time Community Resource Officers, one full time canine training officer. The office for north and east zones is at 711 Fairview Road. Community Resource Officer Todd Brigman encouraged use of a home security survey.
- Asheville Fire Department Operations Division Chief Michael Clark reported there are seventy-five fire fighters employed on each of three shifts. He said that fire stations should be considered a community resource. They do blood pressure checks. An audience member asked about updating home information and Division Chief Clark suggested calling the EOC non-emergency number.

Chris summarized what was heard about bears, speeding, crime, break-ins, and sidewalks noting that City Council is considering five-year capital improvements next month focusing on sidewalks. He hopes that the NAC retreat next month may yield some guidance with the multi-modal committee on needed linkages. He also reminded everyone that City Council likes organized neighborhoods as they can better articulate neighborhood needs.

Vice Chairman Alan made closing remarks and Saul thanked everyone for attending. The public meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Elaine Poovey
Secretary